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"A THING OF SHREDS AND PATCHES*."

Aſſociation againſt Levellers.(a)

AND TO PROCURE THE

Reſtoration of the Rights of the People.(b)

ALDGATE, March 11, 1793.

AT a Meeting of the Aldgate Society of Friends of the People, aſſociated for the cultivation and diffuſion of Political Knowledge,

Reſolved, That the following Declaration of Conſtitutional Rights of King, Lords, and Commons of Great Britain, having been unanimouſly adopted by this Society, and entered on their minutes, be forthwith inſerted in the Public Papers.(i)

* SHAKESPEARE.

(a) "DESPOTISM *is a levelling principle*, it aſſimilates all conditions, depreſſes all excellence, prevents the young idea from ſhooting to a manly height, and impreſſes on every member of the body politic an identity of character, indicative of debility or decrepitude! The human intellect under ſuch governments grows weak and effeminate, and never riſes to that degree of elevation which characterizes the inhabitants of free countries." Anonymus.

(b) "I return to you baffled and diſpirited, with hardly a ray of hope of ſeeing any change in the miſerable courſe of public calamities. I could yet entertain a cheerful hope, and undertake again the commiſſion, (to repreſent you with alacrity as well as zeal) if I could ſee any effectual ſteps taken to remove the original cauſe of the miſchief, but until the purity of the conſtituent body, and thereby that of the repreſentative, be reſtored, there is no hope. I look upon reſtoring election and repreſentation, in ſome degree, to their original purity to be that, without which all other efforts will be vain and ridiculous. If ſomething be not done, you may, indeed, retain the outward form of the conſtitution, but not the power thereof."

Sir George Saville, who was always in Parliament to ſerve his country, or in the field to defend it.

"Corruption has gone abroad with giant ſtrides; nor has your *holy* of *holies* eſcaped, and 'ye are become an abomination to the Lord."

E. Burke's Speech in the Houſe of Commons in favour of the Liberty of the Preſs. London Muſeum, 1771.

(i) The preſs muſt be free, much evil has been corrected by it. If government find itſelf annoyed by it, let it examine it's own conduct and it will find the cauſe; let it amend it, and it will find the remedy.

Mr. Erſkine.

Every man may publiſh at his diſcretion his opinions concerning

I. The right of making laws for this realm is, by the Conſtitution, lodged in the hands of King, Lords of Parliament, and the Repreſentatives of the Commons, or Commoners.

II. Every Commoner (infants, inſane perſons, and criminals, who may have forfeited their rights by the commiſſion of crimes, only excepted) is, of common right, and by the law of God, a Freeman, and entitled to the full enjoyment of political liberty.

III. Every Britiſh Commoner has a right to an actual ſhare, either in legiſlation itſelf, or in electing ſome one of thoſe who are to frame the laws. (*c*)

IV. It is the right of the Britiſh Commoners to elect a new Houſe of Parliament, once at leaſt, in every year. (*d*)

V. That "in conformity to the ſober judgment and the ſolid intereſts of the people, for whom and by whom Parliaments ſubſiſt," (*e*) the preſent corrupt and defective ſtate of the repreſentation of theſe kingdoms, both in reſpect to the duration of Parliaments, and the mode in which perſons are choſen to ſerve therein, demand the moſt ſerious attention of the Public, and ought to be the ſubject of a radical reform:—"Sooner or later this muſt be done, and, this being done well, few things will remain undone, which ought to be done at all." (*e*)

Reſolved, That the following Abſtract of Reſolutions, point-

forms and ſyſtems of government; if they be wiſe and enlightened the world will gain by them; if they be weak and abſurd, they will be laughed at and forgotten; and if they be *bona fide* they cannot be criminal, however erroneous. Lord Loughborough.

(*c*) "In a free ſtate, every man (who is ſuppoſed a free agent) ought to be, in ſome meaſure, his own Governor; and, therefore, a branch at leaſt of the Legiſlative Power ſhould reſide in the WHOLE BODY of the PEOPLE." BLACKSTONE.

(*d*) 4. Edw 3. c.14. and 36 Edw. 3. c. 10. See alſo Dr. Swift's Letter to Mr. Pope, dated Jan. 10, 1721. "As to Parliaments, ſays the Dean, I adore the wiſdom of that Gothic inſtitution which made them annual, and I was confident our Liberty would never be placed on a firm foundation until that ancient law was reſtored among us; for who ſees not, that while ſuch Aſſemblies are permitted to have a longer duration, there grows up a commerce of Corruption between the Miniſtry and the Deputies, wherein they both find their account, to the manifeſt danger of Liberty; which traffic would neither anſwer the deſign nor the expence, if Parliaments were elected once a year."

(*e*) Dr. Parr's Sequel to the printed paper of a Birmingham Rector, &c. p. 56.

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ed to the Purification of a Parliament, dangerouſly corrupted; Reſolutions which were formed under the auſpices of the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, that ſteady and enlightened Patriot the Rev. Chriſtopher Wyvill, and divers others, their aſſociates; be entered in the Books of this Society.

" Whereas the life, liberty and property of every man, is or may be affected by the law of the land in which he lives, and every man is bound to pay obedience to the ſame."

" And whereas by the conſtitution of this kingdom, the right of making laws, is veſted in three eſtates, of King, Lords, and Commons in Parliament aſſembled; and the conſent of all the three eſtates, comprehending the whole community, is neceſſary to make laws for binding the whole community. And whereas, the Houſe of Commons repreſents all the Commons of the realm; and the conſent of the Houſe of Commons, binds the conſent of all the Commons of this realm, and in all caſes on which the Legiſlature is competent to decide."

" And whereas, no man is or can be actually repreſented, who hath not a vote in the election of his repreſentative."

" And whereas, it is the right of every Britiſh Commoner, (infants, perſons of inſane mind, and criminals incapacitated by law only excepted) to have a vote in the election of the repreſentative, who is to give his conſent to the making of laws, by which he is to be bound."

" And whereas the number of perſons who are ſuffered to vote for electing the members of the Houſe of Commons, do not, at this time, amount to one-ſixth part of the whole Commons of this realm; whereby far the greater part of the ſaid Commons, are deprived of their right to elect their repreſentatives; and the conſent of the majority of the whole community, and to which the ſaid majority have not, in fact, conſented by themſelves, or by their repreſentatives."

" And whereas, the ſtate of election of Members of the Houſe of Commons, hath, in proceſs of time, ſo groſsly deviated from its ſimple and natural principle of *repreſentation* and *equality*, that in ſeveral places the Members are returned by the property of one man; that the ſmalleſt boroughs ſend as many Members as the largeſt counties, and that a majority of the Repreſentatives of the whole nation, are choſen by a number of votes, not exceeding twelve thouſand."

Reſolved, That the following Extract from Mr. Burke's " Thoughts on the preſent Diſcontents, and his Speech upon the Reform of the Royal Houſhold;" be entered on the Books of this Society.

" They who will not conform their conduct to the public good, and cannot ſupport it by the prerogative of the Crown, have

have adopted a new plan. They have totally abandoned the ſhattered and old faſhioned fortreſs of prerogative, and made a lodgment in the ſtrong hold of parliament itſelf. If they have any evil deſign, to which there is no ordinary legal power commenſurate, they bring it into Parliament. *There the whole is executed from the beginning to end, and the power of obtaining their object abſolute; and the ſafety in the proceeding perfect; no rules to confine, nor after reckonings to terrify.* For Parliament cannot, with any great propriety, puniſh others, for things, in which they themſelves have been ACCOMPLICES. Thus, its controul upon the executory power, is loſt; becauſe it is made to partake in every conſiderable act of government and impeachment, that *great guardian of the purity of the Conſtitution*, is in danger of being loſt, even to the idea of it. Until this time, the opinion of the people, through the power of an aſſembly, ſtill in ſome ſort popular, led to the greateſt honours and emoluments, in the gift of the Crown. Now the principle is reverſed, and the favour of the court is the only ſure way of obtaining and holding thoſe honours, which ought to be IN THE DISPOSAL OF THE PEOPLE.—The diſtempers of Monarchy, were the great ſubject of apprehenſion in the *laſt century: in this*, the diſtempers of Parliament.—The people ought to be *excited** to a more ſtrict and detailed attention to the conduct of their repreſentatives. Standards, for judging more ſyſtematically upon their conduct, ought to be ſettled in the meetings of counties and corporations, and frequent and correct liſts of voters, in all important queſtions, ought to be procured."

" By ſuch means, ſomething may be done, ſince it may appear who thoſe are, that, by an indiſcriminate ſupport of all adminiſtrations, have totally baniſhed all integrity and confidence out of public proceedings; have confounded the beſt men with the worſt, and weakened and diſſolved, inſtead of ſtrengthening and compacting the general frame of government:—It muſt always be the wiſh of an unconſtitutional Stateſman, that an

(*) The SPIRIT of the People muſt frequently be ROUSED in order to curb the ambition of the Court, and the dread of rouſing this Spirit muſt be employed to prevent that ambition. Nothing is ſo effectual to this purpoſe as the LIBERTY OF THE PRESS, by which all the learning, wit, and genius of the Nation may be employed on the ſide of Freedom, and every one be animated to its defence. As long, therefore, as the REPUBLICAN part of our Government can maintain itſelf againſt the Monarchical, it will naturally be careful to keep the Preſs open, as of importance to its own preſervation.

Hume, on the Liberty of the Preſs.

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Houſe of Commons, *who are entirely dependent upon him, ſhould have every right of the people dependent upon their pleaſure*: FOR IT WAS DISCOVERED, THAT THE FORMS OF A FREE, AND THE ENDS OF AN ARBITRARY GOVERNMENT WERE THINGS NOT ALTOGETHER INCOMPATIBLE."

" The power of the Crown, almoſt dead and rotten, as prerogative, has grown up anew, with much more ſtrength, and far leſs odium, under the name of influence; an influence which operates without noiſe and violence; which converts the very antagoniſt into the inſtrument of power; which contains within itſelf a perpetual principle of growth and renovation; and which *the diſtreſſes and the proſperity of the country equally tend to augment*, was an admirable ſubſtitute for a prerogative, which, being only the offspring of antiquated prejudices, had moulded in its original ſtamina, irreſiſtable principles of decay and diſſolution."

" The *ignorance* of the people, is a bottom but for a temporary ſyſtem; but the intereſt of active men in the ſtate, is perpetual and infallible."(*f*)

" What I confeſs, was uppermoſt with me; what bent the whole courſe of my mind was, the reduction of that corrupt influence, which is itſelf the perennial ſpring of all prodigality and diſorder; which loads us more than millions of debt; which takes away vigour from our councils, and every ſhadow of authority and credit from the moſt venerable parts of our Conſtitution."(*g*)

Reſolved, That the following extract from page 137 to 140 of the New Annual Regiſter for the year 1782, be inſerted in the Books of this Society.

" For a conſiderable time paſt, public meetings had been occaſionally holden, in various parts of the kingdom, in which the ſtate of parliamentary repreſentation was the ſubject of diſcuſſion, in which its inadequateneſs was ſtrongly pointed out, and in which ſpirited reſolutions were entered into relative to the neceſſity of a more equal re-

(*f*) Thoughts on the preſent diſcontents.

(*g*) Mr. Burke's Speech on the Reform of the Houſehold: it was upon that occaſion that this *conſiſtent* (for ſo, if we can take his word, he is) Idolater of Royalty ſaid, " Kings are naturally fond of low company; they are ſo elevated above all the reſt of mankind, that they muſt look on all their ſubjects as on a level:" When afterwards it pleaſed that SOVEREIGN, whoſe wiſdom is unerring, and whoſe power is irreſiſtible, to afflict our beloved King in a manner that touched every good man with the moſt poignant concern, Mr. Burke vauntingly ſaid, " Heaven had hurled him from his Throne, and reduced him below the meaneſt of his ſubjects." O! the ſhame, the indecency, of that time—ſerving Sycophant's brutal, though momentary triumph!

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preſentation of the people. Many meetings of this kind took place in the courſe of the year 1782, in the metropolis, and in different counties, cities, and towns of the kingdom. On the 1ſt of February, at a common-hall of the livery of the city of London, at Guildhall, it was reſolved, "That the unequal repreſentation of the people, the corrupt ſtate of parliament, and the perverſion thereof, from its original inſtitution, had been the principal cauſes of the unjuſt war with America, of the conſequent diſmemberment of the Britiſh empire, and of every grievance of which the nation complained. That theſe grievances could never be removed, until the right of the people to their conſtitutional ſhare in the Engliſh government ſhould be reeſtabliſhed, by a fair and equal repreſentation in parliament, and a frequent election of their repreſentatives, according to ancient uſage. That a committee of the livery of London ſhould be appointed, for the purpoſe of obtaining a reſtoration of theſe rights: and that the ſaid committee ſhould take the moſt effectual methods for obtaining a more equal repreſentation of the people in parliament and a frequent election of the repreſentatives, according to ancient uſage; and that, for theſe purpoſes, they ſhould concur and correſpond with other committees throughout the kingdom." Similar reſolutions were made at other meetings, and by other bodies; and, in particular, the committee of aſſociation for the county of York exerted themſelves with much ſpirit and ability in the management of this buſineſs, and publiſhed ſeveral addreſſes to the public on this important ſubject.

"Theſe exertions of the people at length cauſed the matter to become in ſome degree an object of diſcuſſion in the houſe of commons. It was introduced into that aſſembly on the 7th of May 1782, by Mr. William Pitt. That gentleman then obſerved, that the repreſentation of the commons in parliament was a matter ſo truly intereſting, that it had at all times exited the regard of men the moſt enlightened; and the defects, which they had found in that repreſentation, had given them reaſon to apprehend the moſt alarming conſequences to the conſtitution. That the frame of our conſtitution had undergone material alterations, by which the commons' houſe of parliament had received an improper and dangerous bias, and by which, indeed, it had fallen ſo greatly from that direction and effect which it was intended, and ought to have in the conſtitution, he believed it would be idle for him to attempt to prove. It was a fact ſo plain and palpable, that every man's reaſon, if not his experience, muſt point it out to him. He had only to examine the quality and nature of that branch of the conſtitution, as originally eſtabliſhed, and to compare it with its preſent ſtate and condition. That beautiful frame of government, which had made us the envy and admiration of mankind, in which the people were entitled to hold ſo diſtinguiſhed a ſhare, was ſo far dwindled and departed from its original purity, that the repreſentatives ceaſed in a great degree to be connected with the people; it was the eſſence of the conſtitution that the people had a ſhare in the government by the means of repreſentation; and its excellency and permanency muſt reſult from this repreſentation being equal, eaſy, practicable, and compleat. When it ceaſed to be ſo; when the repreſentative ceaſed to have connection with the conſtituent, and

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was either dependant on the crown, or the ariſtocracy; there was then a defect in the frame of repreſentation, and it was not innovation, but recovery of conſtitution, to repair it.

Mr. Pitt farther obſerved, that it was not now his intention to enter into any inquiry reſpecting the proper mode of reform, or to conſider what would moſt completely tally and ſquare with the original frame of the conſtitution. All that he at preſent intended was, to move for the inſtitution of a committee, to be compoſed of ſuch men as the houſe ſhould, in their wiſdom, ſelect, as the moſt proper and the beſt qualified for inveſtigating this ſubject, and making a report to the houſe, of the beſt means of carrying into execution a moderate and ſubſtantial reform of the repreſentation of the people. But though he would not preſs any particular propoſition upon the houſe, he ſtill thought it his duty to ſtate ſome facts and circumſtances, which, in his opinion, made this object of reform eſſentially neceſſary. He believed, indeed, that there was no member of that houſe, who would not acknowledge, that the repreſentation, as it now ſtood, was incomplete.(*b*) It was perfectly underſtood, that there were ſome boroughs under the influence of the treaſury, and others totally poſſeſſed by them. It was manifeſt, that ſuch boroughs had no one quality of repreſentation in them. They had no ſhare nor concern in the general intereſts of the country, and they had in fact no ſtake for which to appoint their guardians in the popular aſſembly. The influence of the treaſury in ſome boroughs was alſo conteſted, not by the electors of thoſe boroughs, but by ſome one or other powerful man, who aſſumed or pretended to an hereditary property of what ought only to be the rights and privileges of the electors. The intereſts of the treaſury were conſidered, as well as the intereſts of the great man, the lord, or the commoner, who had connections with the borough; but the intereſts of the people, the rights of the electors, were the only things that never were attended to, nor taken into

(*b*) "To what groſs abſurdities," ſays that great maſter of reaſoning, the celebrated Mr. Locke, "the following of cuſtom, when reaſon has left it, may lead, we may be ſatisfied, when we ſee the bare name of a town of which there remains not ſo much as the ruins, where ſcarce ſo much houſing as a ſheep-cote, or more inhabitants than a ſhepherd, is to be found, ſends as many repreſentatives to the Grand Aſſembly of law-makers, as a whole county numerous in people and powerful in riches. This ſtrangers ſtand amazed at, and every one muſt confeſs needs a remedy."

Is it not repugnant to every principle of reaſon, to ſuppoſe that a partial parliamentary repreſentation will better promote the intereſts of the great body of the people, than one more general or univerſal? "It being the intereſt," as Mr. Locke juſtly obſerves, "as well as the intention of the people, to have a fair and equal repreſentation; whoever brings it neareſt to that is an undoubted *friend to* and *eſtabliſher of the government*, and cannot miſs the conſent and approbation of the community."

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the account. Would any man ſay, that in this caſe there was the moſt diſtant idea or principle of repreſentation? There were other boroughs, which had now in fact no actual exiſtence, but in the return of members to the houſe. They had no exiſtence in property, in population, in trade, or in weight of any kind. There were hardly any men in ſuch boroughs who had a right to vote; and they were the ſlaves and the ſubjects of perſons who claimed the property of the boroughs, and who in fact made the returns. This alſo was no repreſentation, nor any thing like it. Another ſet of boroughs, and towns, claimed to themſelves the right of bringing their votes to market. They had no other market, no other property, and no other ſtake in the country, than the property and price which they procured for their votes.(*i*) Such boroughs were the moſt dangerous of all others. So far from conſulting the intereſts of their country, in the choice which they made, they held out their borough to the beſt purchaſer; and, in fact, ſome of them belonged more to the nabob of Arcot, than they did to the people of Great Britain. They were towns and boroughs more within the juriſdiction of the Carnatic, than the limits of the empire of Great Britain; and it was a fact pretty well known, and generally underſtood, that the nabob of Arcot had no leſs than ſeven or eight members in that houſe. Such boroughs were manifeſtly ſources of corruption: they gave riſe to an inundation of corrupt wealth, and corrupt members, by which no intereſt of the people of this country was promoted; and ſuch boroughs ought to be aboliſhed.

Mr. Pitt proceeded to remark, that there was no man in that houſe who had more reverence for the conſtitution, and more reſpect, even for its veſtiges, than himſelf. *But he was afraid, that the reverence,*

(*i*) "Where bribery and corruption prevail among the governors of a free ſtate, unleſs ſome powerful remedy is applied, there the deſtruction of liberty muſt unavoidably, and preſently, enſue."

Preface to Clarke's edition of Salluſt.

"Do we not know, ſir, that many of our little boroughs are already become ſo venial, that their brokers, or rather their pimps, deal as openly for the ſale of them as bawds for that of a proſtitute."

Sir William Windham's Speech on a motion to limit the number of Officers in his Majeſty's ſervice from ſitting in the Houſe.—Gent. Mag. Vol. X. p. 652. 1740.

"Seats are let to hire, like ſtalls for cattle at a fair."

Mr. Horne Tooke's Petition to the preſent Commons.

"It is indifferent to me, whether the crown, by its own immediate act impoſes new, and diſpenſes with old laws, or whether the ſame arbitrary power produces the ſame effects through the medium of the Houſe of Commons—Our hiſtory furniſhes frequent inſtances of the ſenſe of Parliament running counter to the ſenſe of the Nation."

Junius.

and the enthuſiaſm, which Engliſhmen entertained for the conſtitution, would, if not ſuddenly prevented, be the means of deſtroying it; for ſuch was their enthuſiaſm, that they would not even remove its defects, for fear of touching its beauty. He admired the one ſo much, ſo great was his reverence for the beauties of that conſtitution, that he wiſhed to remove thoſe defects, as he clearly perceived, that they were defects which altered the radical principles of the conſtitution; and therefore, it would not be innovation, but recovery of conſtitution, to remove them. That a reform of the preſent parliamentary repreſentation was indiſpenſably neceſſary, was the ſentiment of ſome of the firſt and greateſt characters in the kingdom; and he ſhould alſo take the liberty to obſerve, that he well knew it to be the ſentiment of his much honoured father, the late Earl of Chatham.(*k*) His lordſhip was firmly of opinion, that a reform of the repreſentation was abſolutely requiſite for the ſecurity of the liberties of the people of this country. He concluded with moving, "That a committee ſhould be appointed to enquire into the ſtate of the repreſentation in parliament, and to report to the houſe their obſervations thereon." The motion was ſeconded by Mr. Alderman Sawbridge.

Sir George Saville zealouſly ſupported the motion, and declared it to be his opinion, *that the houſe might as well call itſelf the repreſentative of France as of the people of England*; for the meaſures of the late miniſtry had certainly received the ſanction of that houſe, although they had as univerſally been reprobated by the country at large. He had a large tree, he ſaid, growing ſome time ſince on his eſtate, which bore many green leaves on the trunk of it, and ſeemed to be in a flouriſhing ſtate; but, on looking at the tree there appeared a hole or two, which he looked farther into, and, on a cloſe inſpection, he found the tree was rotten within; the inſide was mere touchwood. He had the rotten part dug out, and now the tree formed a commodious place, in which a dozen perſons might dine with pleaſure. He compared the preſent conſtitution to this tree; it appeared ſound, but on an inſpection it would be found like the tree, rotten at the heart. The nation was certainly in a very bad ſtate, though a more equal parliamentary repreſentation might contribute to remove ſome of the public evils.

The motion, which was alſo ſupported by Mr. Fox, was loſt, 161 to 141.

Reſolved, that the following Extract from "a Letter, dated 15th Auguſt, 1783., written by his Grace the Duke of Richmond, to Colonel Sharman, Chairman to the Committee of Correſpondence, appointed by the Delegates of 45 Corps of

(*k*) "It is neceſſary to infuſe a new portion of health into the conſtitution, to enable it to bear its infirmities."——Lord Chatham.

"I am as much offended as any man at ſeeing ſo many of the rotten boroughs under the direct influence of the crown, or at the diſpoſal of private perſons."——Junius.

Volunteers, aſſembled at Liſburn in Ireland, for taking preparatory Steps to forward their intentions on the Subject of a more equal Repreſentation in Parliament;" be entered on the Books of this Society.

" The ſubject of a Parliamentary Reform, is that which, of all others, in my opinion, moſt deſerves the attention of the Public; (*l*) as I conceive it would include every other advantage which a nation can wiſh: and I have no heſitation in ſaying, that from every conſideration which I have been able to give this great Queſtion, that for many years has occupied my mind; and from every day's experience, to the preſent hour; I am more and more convinced, that the reſtoring the right of voting univerſally to every man, not incapacitated by nature, for want of reaſon, or by law, for the commiſſion of crimes, together with annual elections, is the only reform that can be effectual

(*l*) The monſtrous injuſtice and glaring partiality of the preſent repreſentation of the Commons of England, is almoſt univerſally acknowledged: policy, no leſs than juſtice, calls our attention to this momentous point; for, without a true repreſentation of the Commons, our Conſtitution is eſſentially defective, and our PARLIAMENT, a DELUSIVE NAME, a mere PHANTOM.

Wilkes's Speech in Parliament, March 21, 1776.

The repreſentation which in England is but a mockery, in Scotland does not bear even the ſemblance of a real repreſentation. Lord Sempill's Addreſs to the Public.

To ſhew the *diſproportion* according to *Property*, it may be ſtated that of the Land Tax £. 307,140 8*s*. 5*d*. is paid by Middleſex, which returns but 8 Members.

Cornwall pays £ 31,976, and returns 44 perſons who are called the Repreſentatives of the People; yet, by the rule of proportion, Middleſex ought to ſend 47, and Cornwall not more than 5 Members.

The Houſe of Commons conſiſts of 513 Members.

71 Peers and the Treaſury return •	167	
91 Commoners return • •	139	
		306
17 Boroughs not containing on an average 150 Voters, each return • •		21
261 Perſons return Members to ſerve in Parliament		327
Returned by compromiſes, i. e. by a truce ſtipulated by the people and the creatures of the Court, by which 14 counties, cities, and boroughs, are deprived of all political power and parliamentary weight •		28
		457

Yet, ſays a learned judge, (Aſhhurſt) " We are *virtually* repreſented!"

and

and permanent; I am further convinced, that it is the only reform that is practicable."

"All other plans that are of a palliative nature, have been found inſufficient to intereſt, and animate, the great body of the people, from whoſe earneſtneſs alone, any reform can be expected. A long excluſion from any ſhare in the Legiſlature of their country, has rendered the great maſs of the people indifferent, whether the monopoly that ſubſiſts, continues in the hands of a more or leſs extended company; or whether it is divided by them into ſhares, of ſomewhat more or leſs juſt proportions. The Public feels itſelf unconcerned in theſe conteſts, except as to the oppreſſions it ſuffers, and the exactions it ſuffers, which it knows muſt continue ſo long as the people remain deprived of all controul over their Repreſentatives."

"The leſſer Reform has been attempted with every poſſible advantage in its favour, not only from the zealous ſupport of the advocates for a more effectual one, but from the aſſiſtance of men of great weight, both in and out of power. But with all theſe temperaments and helps, it has failed. No one proſelyte has been gained from corruption, nor has the *leaſt ray of hope* been held out from any quarter, that the Houſe of Commons was inclined to adopt any other plan of reform. The WEIGHT of CORRUPTION has cruſhed this more gentle, as it would have defeated any more efficacious plan in like circumſtances. From that quarter, therefore, I have nothing to hope, IT IS FROM THE PEOPLE AT LARGE THAT I EXPECT ANY GOOD; and I am convinced, that the only way to make them feel that they are concerned in the buſineſs, is to contend for their *full, clear, and indiſputable right of univerſal repreſentation.*"

"In the more liberal and great plan of *univerſal repreſentation*, a clear and diſtinct principle at once appears that cannot lead us wrong; not conveniency, but right. If it is not a maxim of our conſtitution, that a Britiſh ſubject is to be governed only by laws, to which he has conſented by himſelf, or his repreſentative, we ſhould inſtantly abandon the error; but if it is the eſſential of freedom, founded on the eternal principle of juſtice and wiſdom, and our unalienable birth-right, we ſhould not heſitate in aſſerting it. (*m*) Let us then but determine to act on this broad principle, of *giving to every man his own*, and we

(*m*) "You may always depend upon ME." His Grace's Letter to Sir Thomas Frankland and the Freeholders of Suſſex.

ſhall

ſhall immediately get rid of all the perplexities (*n*) to which the narrow notions of partiality and excluſion muſt ever be ſubject."

" In the digeſting a plan upon this noble foundation, we ſhall not find any difficulty, (*o*) that the moſt common underſtanding and

(*n*) The various rights of voting are ſo complex, that even nine volumes of reports by Meſſrs. Douglas, Luders, Phillips, and Frazer, are inſufficient to elucidate that intricate part of the myſteries of our glorious conſtitution, which admits a copyhold to be a ſufficient qualification to repreſent, but not to elect!—9 Ann. c. 5. For the borough of Saltaſh, two gentlemen voted in parliament for three years, each of them denying the pretenſions of the other, the Houſe of Commons having at different times decided againſt the right of both.

See the Report publiſhed by the Society of Friends of the People, price 1s a publication highly intereſting to every Briton.

Within the laſt ten years after the Houſe of Commons had deigned to hear the appeals for undue elections, the Petitioners for the County of Bedford, and the Borough of Cirenceſter, did not procure a deciſion in two months—thoſe for the Electors of Weſtminſter conſumed, to very little purpoſe, upwards of three.

In conſequence of the preſent intricate nature of the law of elections, two perſons who had no right whatever to ſit in Parliament have aſſumed the right of repreſenting Stockbridge two years and a half!

Die veneris. Feb. 22, 1793. Reſolved—" That it appears to this Committee, that there was the moſt *notorious bribery* and *corruption* at the laſt election of members to ſerve in Parliament for the borough of Stockbridge, in the county of Southampton." Vote of the Houſe of Commons.

(*o*) " Neceſſity has been the mother of the moſt eſſential improvements in the conſtitution. If our anceſtors had been ſo tenacious of old eſtabliſhments, as never to have made trial of a new inſtitution, what would have become of our liberties? We need not, from any ſuperſtitious reverence for the wiſdom of our anceſtors, be afraid of innovation. When reaſon, and the principles of the conſtitution, ſanction a Reform, muſt we be deterred by mere names? JUDGES may be credulous—may err—nay, it is *poſſible*, they may be *corrupted!*"

Mr. Wedderburn's (now Lord High Chancellor) excellent Speech in favour of Serj. Glynn's motion to reſtrain the power of the Attorney General. See London Muſeum, 1771.

January 25, 1771. " When the debate was over, ſeveral new writs were moved for: but when Mr. Wedderburn was mentioned, (he had accepted the office of Solicitor General) the members expreſſed their contempt of it by *a very loud and diſmal groan*, (ſuch as the

and pains will not eaſily ſurmount. It does not require half the ingenuity of a common Tax Bill."

" The great expence of elections, which ariſes chiefly from the coſt of conveying electors to the place of the poll, and entertaining them there and on the road, will be no more, when every man will vote in his own pariſh. Bribery muſt entirely ceaſe: the numbers to be bought, would be infinitely too great for any purſe. Beſides annual Parliaments, by their frequency, and by their ſhortneſs, would doubly operate in preventing corruption. The vaſt expence of petitions to Parliament, on account of illegal returns, would be reduced almoſt to nothing. The points on which theſe objects generally turn, are the qualifications of the electors, under the numberleſs reſtrictions the preſent laws have impoſed, which require the attendance of witneſſes, the production of records, and are ſubject to infinite diſpute. But when no other qualification ſhould be neceſſary, but that of being a Britiſh ſubject and of age, there can be but little left to contend upon, as to the right of electors to vote. All other queſtions that could afford ground for a petition, would be trifling, and might be decided in one day."

" One ſubject of apprehenſion is, that the principle of allowing to every man an equal right to vote, tends to equality in other reſpects, and to level property. To me, it ſeems to have a direct contrary tendency. The equal rights of men to ſecurity from oppreſſion, and to the enjoyments of life and liberty, ſtrikes me as perfectly compatible with their unequal ſhares of induſtry, labour and genius, which are the origin of inequality of fortunes.

the livery of London generally give in Guildhall to the name of an alderman whom they diſlike) and it was negatived by ſeveral of the members crying out No! no! no! A circumſtance ſo extraordinarily, and peculiarly diſgraceful, has not happened in the memory of the oldeſt member of the Houſe of Commons, and muſt for ever cover the apoſtate with ſhame."

London Muſeum, 1771.

" To ſacrifice a reſpected character, and to renounce the eſteem of ſociety, requires more than Mr. Wedderburn's reſolution; and though in him it was rather a profeſſion, than a deſertion of his principles, yet we have ſeen him in the Houſe of Commons overwhelmed with confuſion, and almoſt bereft of his faculties. I have left no room for an accommodation with the piety of St. James's—if Junius could deſcend to it, proſtitution would loſe its natural merit and influence in the cabinet, and *treachery* be no longer a *recommendation* to the Royal favour."— Junius.

Lord Auckland had received many favours from thoſe whom he deſerted, but that was no diſqualification for his being appointed an Ambaſſador.

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The equality and the inequality of men, are both founded in nature; and whilſt we do not confound the two, and only ſupport her eſtabliſhments, we cannot err. The protection of property, appears to me, to be one of the moſt eſſential ends of ſociety, and ſo far from injuring it by this plan, I conceive it to be the only means of preſerving it; for the preſent ſyſtem, is haſtening with great ſtrides to a perfect *equality*, or, *univerſal poverty*."

"I know no man, let him be ever ſo poor, who in his conſumption of food and uſe of raiment, does not pay taxes; and I would wiſh to encourage an enthuſiaſm for his country, in the breaſt of every ſubject, by giving him his juſt ſhare in its government."

Reſolved unanimouſly, That the following extract from the ſpeech of Mr. Fox, delivered by him in the Houſe of Commons the firſt of laſt month, be entered in the books of this Society.

"The uſe of the word EQUALITY, (ſaid Mr. Fox) has been deemed highly objectionable. (*p*) When taken as the French meant it, nothing was more innocent, for what did they ſay?—"All men are equal in reſpect of their rights." To this he aſſented, all men had an equal right to unequal things; one man to a ſhilling, another to a thouſand pounds; one man to a cottage, another to a palace: but the right in both was the ſame; an equal right of enjoying, an equal right of inheriting and of poſſeſſing inheritance, or acquiſition. The effect of the propoſed Addreſs (to the King) was to condemn, not the abuſe of thoſe principles, but the principles themſelves. To this he could not aſſent, for they were the principles on which all juſt and equal Governments are founded."

"Contrary to Mr. Burke's aſſertions, the PEOPLE are undoubtedly the SOVEREIGN in every State; they have a RIGHT TO CHANGE THE FORM OF THEIR GOVERNMENT, and a RIGHT TO CASHIER THEIR GOVERNORS FOR MISCONDUCT, as the People of this country caſhiered James the Second for miſconduct, not by a Parliament, or any regular form known to the

(*p*) EQUALITY conſiſts in this, that every one may enjoy the ſame rights.

The law ought to be equal for all, whether it rewards or puniſhes; whether it protects or repreſſes.

All the citizens are admiſſible to all public places, employments, and functions. People who are free acknowledge no motives of preference but talents and virtues. *The Declaration* of the Rights of Man: Paris edition.

Conſtitution,

Conſtitution, but by a CONVENTION ſpeaking the ſenſe of the People; thus they elected William to a vacant Throne, not only ſetting aſide James, whom they had juſtly CASHIERED for MISCONDUCT, but his innocent Son. Again, they elected the Houſe of Brunſwick, not individually, but by Dynaſty, and that Dynaſty to continue while the terms or conditions, on which it was elected, *are fulfilled, and no longer*. The right to do all this cannot be admitted without acknowledging the SOVEREIGNTY(*q*) OF THE PEOPLE TO BE PARAMOUNT TO ALL OTHER LAWS. Mr. Burke had ſaid, that though we had once exerciſed this Power, we had, in the very act of exerciſing it, renounced it for ever. We had neither renounced it, nor, if we had been ſo diſpoſed, was ſuch a renunciation in our power. We elected firſt an individual, then a dynaſty, and laſtly paſſed an Act of Parliament, in the reign of Queen Anne, declaring it to be THE RIGHT OF THE PEOPLE OF THIS REALM, TO DO SO AGAIN, WITHOUT EVEN ASSIGNING A REASON."

"If there are any perſons among us, who doubt the wiſdom of our Monarchical Form of Government, their error is owing to thoſe who change its ſtrong and irrefragable foundation—the RIGHT AND CHOICE OF THE PEOPLE, to a more flimſy and untenable ground of title."

Reſolved unanimouſly, That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Right Hon. Charles James Fox, for the zeal, ability, and ſpirit, with which, notwithſtanding the cowardice of ſome, and the treacherous deſertion of others, (pretended friends!) he has, during the preſent ſeſſion of Parliament, defined the Conſtitution, aſſerted the rights, and vindicated the libelled Loyalty of

(*q*) There is no GREATNESS or DOMINION on earth ſo SACRED but it muſt FALL before the LIBERTIES of the PEOPLE.
Dr. Crowe's Sermon, Nov. 5, 1781, before the Univerſity of Oxford.

This doctrine which Mr. Burke was unable to confute, he has ſince endeavoured to calumniate; let us therefore attend to his former opinions:—"If any aſk me what a free Government is, I anſwer, That it is what the PEOPLE think ſo, and that they, and not I, are the natural, lawful, and competent judges of this matter." When it was abſurdly expected that the people of North America ſhould yield implicit ſubmiſſion to the Acts of a Britiſh Parliament, becauſe Birmingham, Mancheſter, and other large towns are unrepreſented; "Will you," ſaid Mr. Burke, "offer to the Americans the SLOUGH of OUR SLAVERY?" Such were the Declarations of a man, who with frantic rancour and ſuperlative inſolence has ſince denominated the PEOPLE—"*The Swinish Multitude!!!*"

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the People of Great Britain; for his expoſure of thoſe miniſterial arts, which have been practiſed to alarm, to inflame, and to delude the public mind; for his ſtrenuous endeavours to avert from theſe kingdoms the calamities of War, and the indelible infamy of fighting the battles of Deſpotiſm. (*r*)

Reſolved unanimouſly, That the Thanks of this Society be given to Colonel Macleod, Member of Parliament for Inverneſsſhire, for his conſtitutional and patriotic Letters to the Chairman of the Aſſociation for Parliamentary Reform in Scotland; (*s*) and that theſe Reſolutions be inſerted in the Public Papers.

And whereas, we are convinced, that if our forefathers had been diſmayed by the imputation of SEDITION, they would not have left to their deſcendants any valuable portion of either civil or religious Liberty, this Society unanimouſly reſolve, that their grateful Thanks ſhall be preſented to Richard Brinſley Sheridan, Eſq. for his admirable Speech in the Commons Houſe of Parliament, on the 4th inſtant, when he demonſtrated, to the confuſion of Miniſters, and the diſgrace of their Municipal inquiſitors, that they have artfully calumniated the People of this Country, by imputing to them Treaſons and Seditions by charges formed to varniſh APOSTACY; to juſtify Oppreſſion, and as a pretext to brand as TRAITORS thoſe who would not be convicted as DESERTERS.

S. GODFREY, Secretary.

(*r*) "The calamities of war (ſaid Mentor) are more to be dreaded than you imagine. War never fails to exhauſt the ſtate, and endanger its deſtruction, with whatever ſucceſs it is carried on. Though it may be commenced with advantage, it can never be finiſhed without danger of the moſt fatal reverſe of fortune. With whatever ſuperiority of ſtrength an engagement is begun, the leaſt miſtake, the ſlighteſt accident, may turn the ſcale, and give victory to the enemy. Nor can a nation that ſhould be always victorious proſper; it would deſtroy itſelf by deſtroying others. The country would be depopulated, the ſoil untilled, trade would be interrupted, and new burthens would be impoſed on the moſt laborious and uſeful claſſes of men: what is yet worſe, the beſt laws would loſe their force, and a corruption of manners inſenſibly take place: the troops, conſcious of their own importance, will indulge themſelves with impunity, and the diſorder will naturally ſpread itſelf through all the branches of government. A noble elation of mind, a calm ſenſe of ſuperior glory, can never touch the boſom of the tyrant who lives only to deſolate the earth, and who diffuſes not leſs through his own dominions, than thoſe which he conquers from others, carnage and tumult, horror and anguiſh, conſternation, famine, and deſpair."—Fenelon.

(*s*) Sold by Parſons, No. 21, Paternoſter-Row, at 7*s*. per hundred, or a penny each.

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